

PERTUSSIS INFORMATION

General Pertussis Information:

What is Pertussis?

Pertussis (Whooping Cough) is a respiratory disease that is caused by bacteria. Pertussis may cause very severe illness in young children, but can also cause illness in teens and adults. When children catch pertussis, their cough can sound like a whoop, that's why it is also called Whooping Cough.

How Does it Spread?

Pertussis is spread through close contact with an infected person that is coughing or sneezing. Pertussis is very contagious. It is often spread to almost everyone living with the patient.

Pertussis May Be Very Serious

Children are at highest risk for severe illness (including hospitalization and possibly death) until they are fully vaccinated.

Prevention

How You Can Prevent the Spread of Pertussis

Get Vaccinated!

Pertussis vaccines are available for children (age 2 months to 7 years) as well as adolescents (ages 10-18) and adults (ages 11-64).

A series of shots given to children in early infancy can prevent serious pertussis disease. Pertussis vaccine is given at two, four, six, and 15 months of age, and again when a child enters school. At least 3-4 doses are necessary to protect a child from the serious effects of pertussis.

While pertussis in adolescents and adults is rarely life threatening, it can cause a cold-like illness with prolonged coughing (sometimes for up to 2 months). Pertussis can cause people to miss school or work.

If you have pertussis:

Always cover your coughs and sneezes with tissue or the corner of your elbow. Wash your hands (with soap and warm water) often to keep from spreading this disease. Do NOT go to school or daycare until you have taken at least 5 full days of antibiotics. Stay away from small children (they can become very ill from this disease).

General Information on Antibiotics:

Complete Your Antibiotics

Antibiotics can be very effective in treating infections such as pertussis, however you must take them just as you are told. Even if you begin to feel better, it is important to take all of your antibiotics to make sure that all of the bacteria are destroyed.

Take Antibiotics as Directed

Antibiotics are powerful drugs, it is important to take them as directed. Not taking antibiotics correctly can make you very sick and could make the drugs ineffective. For example, some antibiotics should only be taken with food and others should never be taken with food. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you are unsure how to take your antibiotics.

Do Not Save Antibiotics "For Next Time"

Do not save any amount of your antibiotics to treat a future illness. For antibiotics to work properly, the full prescription must be used. If you do not use your prescription as directed your treatment may not be successful, and this may strengthen the bacteria that caused the illness.

Prevent Antibiotic Resistance

Antibiotics have saved many lives and reduced serious complications from many diseases and infections. After more than 50 years of widespread use, however, many antibiotics are not as effective as they once were. When

antibiotics are used too often, bacteria change so that the antibiotics are no longer effective against them. This makes bacterial infections more difficult to treat. Do not take unnecessary antibiotics. If your doctor says that you do not need antibiotics, do not take them.

Common Antibiotic Side Effects

Common side effects of antibiotics may include nausea, diarrhea, and can make you sunburn more easily. Most side effects are mild, but some, especially allergic reactions, can be severe. A severe allergic reaction usually causes shortness of breath and can be life-threatening. If you have any unexpected reaction to an antibiotic, tell your health professional before you take any more antibiotics .

Information for Close Contacts:

Signs and Symptoms of Pertussis (Whooping Cough)

The symptoms of pertussis usually occur in two stages. The first stage begins like a cold, with a runny nose, sneezing and possibly a low-grade fever. The second stage of pertussis includes uncontrolled coughing spells. When a child breathes in, they may make a whooping noise. The coughing spells may be so bad that the person can't sleep and may vomit. This second stage can last for 6 – 10 weeks.

What to do if you Develop Symptoms of Pertussis

If you have been exposed to pertussis, and develop the above symptoms, see your doctor immediately.

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